

## Architecture Practice in India: Navigating Public Relations, Marketing and Client Relation in A Competitive Market

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### Abstract

*As the architectural industry grows, competition is becoming more intense. However, architects face legal restrictions on direct advertising, making it necessary to find alternative ways to promote their work. This paper explores how Indian architects can use public relations (PR) to establish a strong reputation while staying within ethical and legal boundaries. PR allows architects to gain visibility by sharing their expertise, engaging with industry professionals, and building meaningful connections. Indian firms like Studio Mumbai and Morphogenesis have successfully used PR strategies to enhance their presence. Studio Mumbai has gained global recognition through exhibitions and publications that highlight its craftsmanship. Morphogenesis, known for its focus on sustainability and research, has positioned itself as an industry leader by publishing studies and participating in global discussions. While PR is a powerful tool for growth, ethical practices must be maintained. Honest communication, transparent project representation, and responsible client interactions are essential to building trust and credibility. By adopting ethical PR strategies, Indian architectural firms can enhance their reputation, attract high-quality collaborations, and contribute to the industry's evolution. This approach ensures sustainable growth while maintaining professional integrity in a competitive market.*

**Keywords:** Architecture Practice, Public Relations, Marketing Strategies, Client Relations, Indian Architecture Market.

### 1. Introduction

The architecture industry in India is highly competitive, and success depends not only on design skills but also on effective public relations, strategic marketing, and strong client relationships. However, architects face legal restrictions that limit their ability to promote their work beyond a certain extent, making it challenging to showcase their expertise and attract clients. PR involves managing the public image of an architectural firm or individual architect, it becomes a powerful tool for architects to showcase their expertise in an ethical and acceptable manner. Marketing focuses on creating awareness and attracting potential clients. Architects cannot use traditional promotional strategies like billboards or direct ads, but they can still leverage indirect marketing strategies. Unlike PR and marketing, which focus on visibility, client relations revolve around building trust and maintaining long-term

professional relationships. Since architecture projects are long-term investments, strong client relationships lead to repeat business and referrals.

#### 1.1. Research Question

How do architects in India navigate the legal constraints on promotion while leveraging public relations, marketing, and client relations to establish and grow their practice?

#### 1.2. Research Objective

This research aims to analyze the role of Public Relations (PR), Marketing, and Client Relations in the success of architectural firms in India while examining the legal constraints on promotional activities. It explores how architects navigate these restrictions and identifies effective PR strategies that allow them to establish a strong professional presence without direct advertising. Additionally, the study investigates alternative marketing techniques that

comply with industry regulations while enhancing visibility and client engagement. Furthermore, it evaluates the impact of client relationships on business growth, repeat projects, and referrals within the Indian architectural landscape.

## 2. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, case-study-based approach to explore the role of public relations, marketing, and client relations in Indian architectural practice while navigating COA's legal constraints. A qualitative exploratory design is employed to analyze how architects promote their work ethically, relying on secondary data sources, case studies, and industry insights to identify effective strategies. The study focuses on renowned architectural firms such as Studio Mumbai, Morphogenesis, B.V. Doshi (Vāstu Shilpā Consultants), Anupama Kundoo Architects, and Sanjay Puri Architects, selected for their ability to gain industry recognition without violating COA's advertising restrictions. A literature review of architectural publications, media articles, and firm websites, along with an assessment of digital presence, social media engagement, award submissions, and global exhibitions, provides deeper insights into branding approaches. Additionally, an analysis of COA guidelines and ethical considerations offers a regulatory perspective on promotional strategies. [1]

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1. The Communicative Nature of Architecture

"Architecture is a visual art, and the buildings speak for themselves."— **Julia Morgan** (1872–1957, pioneering American architect) This quote emphasizes that architecture is inherently communicative. In the Indian market, where competition is fierce, public perception, marketing, and client relations shape an architect's success. While design excellence is crucial, it must be effectively presented to clients and the public to ensure its value is recognized. Tables and Figures are presented center, as shown below and cited in the manuscript. "If you are not able to transmit what you're trying to achieve to your collaborators, you will only have minions—or morons."— **Bjarke Ingels**(1974-present, a Danish architect) Bjarke

Ingels reinforces this idea from a different perspective. A visionary design is meaningless if it cannot be effectively conveyed to clients, collaborators, and the wider audience. Communication is a bridge between architectural intent and its realization, making public relations (PR), marketing, and client relations indispensable tools for modern architects.

### 3.2. Public Relations in Architecture: Navigation Visibility and Ethics

In India, the role of public relations in architecture is complex due to the regulatory restrictions. Unlike in other industries, where firms have the freedom to market their services aggressively, architects must navigate visibility within ethical and legal constraints. PR strategies become a subtle yet powerful tool in this context, offering architects an avenue to establish their brand presence without violating restrictions by regulatory bodies on direct advertisement. Klingmann (2007) introduced the concept of 'brandsapes,' wherein architectural projects themselves function as branding tools. According to this approach, buildings are not just functional spaces but also mediums of communication that reflect a firm's identity and philosophy. Mitrache (2012) further emphasized media engagement's role in an architect's success. Firms with a strong media presence, whether through publications, interviews, or social media, tend to attract more prestigious projects and industry recognition. Karam (2003) and Gutman (1988) support this perspective, arguing that while conventional advertising is restricted, PR offers an ethical alternative. Thought leadership, industry networking, and collaborations with media outlets help architects gain credibility and visibility without violating professional ethics.

### 3.3. Marketing Strategies: Alternative Approaches to Promotion

Architectural firms worldwide utilize marketing as a tool to enhance visibility, but in India, the constraints of direct advertising necessitate creative, indirect approaches. Successful firms often rely on methods that highlight their work through storytelling rather than conventional promotional tactics. One of the most effective marketing approaches is media

presence. Engaging with architectural journals, participating in design competitions, and collaborating with industry influencers enable architects to showcase their work without overt self-promotion. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and LinkedIn, serve as valuable tools where architects can share insights, process videos, and complete projects, positioning themselves as thought leaders. Another innovative strategy is experiential marketing. Instead of traditional advertising, architects engage clients through interactive design workshops, public installations, and virtual walkthroughs. Gamification is an emerging trend, where firms offer interactive design portals that allow potential clients to experiment with materials, layouts, and colour palettes, creating an immersive experience that fosters interest and engagement.

### **3.4. Client Relations: The Foundation of Architectural Success**

A significant determinant of an architect's long-term success is their relationship with clients. Effective client relations go beyond transactional interactions and foster trust, loyalty, and referrals. One fundamental aspect of client engagement is education. Mostly all clients may lack familiarity with zoning laws, Vastu principles, and regulatory approvals. Providing transparent guidance on these aspects not only simplifies the process for clients but also establishes the Architect as a knowledgeable and reliable partner. Additionally, personalized engagement plays a crucial role. Strategies such as interactive site visits, festive communications, and integration of cultural design preferences create a more meaningful experience for clients. High-profile clients, in particular, respond positively to curated experiences, such as material selection tours, architectural retreats, and site visits to artisan workshops. These experiences deepen their connection with the project, enhancing satisfaction and reinforcing long-term loyalty. Post-project engagement is another critical component. Architectural firms that maintain relationships with past clients through newsletters, post-occupancy check-ins, and home upgrade consultations generate ongoing referrals and strengthen their reputation.

Sharing completed projects in architectural publications and gathering client testimonials further enhances credibility and attracts new prospects.

### **3.5. Implications for Architects and Future Scenarios**

With digital transformation accelerating, the future of architectural practice in India will likely see increased reliance on virtual engagement. Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) experiences will become mainstream tools for client interaction, allowing architects to present design concepts with unprecedented clarity. Additionally, as sustainability and smart design gain prominence, architects who position themselves as experts in these domains will have a competitive edge. The rise of collaborative networks is another key trend. Firms that build strategic alliances with real estate developers, interior designers, and tech-driven design platforms will have greater market visibility and project opportunities. Additionally, the demand for socially responsible design will encourage architects to engage in community-driven initiatives, further solidifying their credibility and influence.

### **3.6. Bridging the Knowledge Gap: Addressing Regulatory Ambiguity**

While international literature provides extensive insights into PR and marketing strategies for architects, the Indian context remains underexplored. Indian Architecture regulatory bodies have many restrictions on advertising, coupled with the absence of clear PR guidelines, create an ambiguous space where firms must navigate promotional activities carefully. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing how successful Indian firms have adapted PR and client engagement within ethical and legal constraints. By examining case studies of architects who have effectively leveraged visibility strategies, the research provides a framework for ethical promotion in Indian architectural practice. [2]

## **4. Case Studies**

Several renowned Indian architects and their firms have effectively leveraged public relations (PR) and media strategies to establish strong professional identities while adhering to Regulatory body's guidelines, are as follows:

### **4.1. Studio Mumbai**

Founded by **Bijoy Jain**, Studio Mumbai is celebrated for its handcrafted approach to architecture, blending traditional Indian craftsmanship with contemporary design. The firm's philosophy emphasizes materiality, sustainability, and local construction techniques, setting it apart in the global architectural sphere. Without direct advertising, Studio Mumbai has gained international recognition through extensive media coverage in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *El Croquis*. Participation in prestigious exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale (2010, 2016) further solidified its reputation, allowing the firm to showcase its meticulously crafted models to a global audience. Collaborations with luxury brands like Hermès have also positioned Studio Mumbai within the high-end architecture space, attracting an elite clientele. The firm's unique approach to slow architecture and its integration of artisans into the design process have been widely discussed in leading architectural journals, reinforcing its thought leadership in the field. By leveraging organic media exposure, global exhibitions, and strategic partnerships, Studio Mumbai has built an internationally acclaimed brand while staying within regulatory body's professional guidelines. Its distinct identity, deeply rooted in material exploration and craftsmanship, continues to draw global clients and industry recognition without relying on traditional advertising methods.[4]

#### 4.2. Morphogenesis

Founded by Manit and Sonali Rastogi, Morphogenesis is one of India's leading firms in sustainable architecture, pioneering climate-responsive design across large-scale projects. The firm has strategically positioned itself as an industry leader through extensive media presence, with features in over 500 publications, including *Dezeen*, *BBC*, *ArchDaily*, and *The Financial Times*. Morphogenesis has also gained credibility through prestigious awards such as the *FuturArc Green Leadership Award* and the *Singapore Institute of Architects Award*, using these accolades as indirect marketing tools. Its commitment to research and thought leadership is evident in its extensive publications on climate-responsive architecture and urban sustainability, along with knowledge-sharing

initiatives such as blogs, digital reports, and case studies. In addition to traditional media, Morphogenesis maintains a strong digital presence through LinkedIn, YouTube, and architecture forums, leveraging webinars, panel discussions, and online lectures to engage with industry professionals and potential clients. The firm's website serves as an educational resource, showcasing sustainability-driven projects and green building methodologies, further reinforcing its expertise. By combining award recognition, media features, and a research-driven digital strategy, Morphogenesis has established itself as a global leader in sustainable architecture, ensuring continuous visibility while adhering to regulatory body ethical guidelines.[3]

#### 5. Result

The research findings emphasize that strategic public relations, marketing, and client relations are crucial for the success of architectural firms in India, despite regulatory restrictions on direct advertising. Architects have effectively used media engagement, thought leadership, and digital platforms to establish credibility and visibility. Award submissions, architectural brandscapes, and social media have proven effective for promotion, while strong client relationships and high-profile collaborations enhance trust and reputation. Sustainability-driven initiatives also offer a competitive edge

##### 5.1. Interpretation of Results in Context

Despite regulatory restrictions on direct advertising, architects have navigated these limitations through alternative, ethical branding strategies that ensure sustained visibility. Media engagement and thought leadership have emerged as powerful promotional tools, with architects like B.V. Doshi and Anupama Kundoo leveraging academic collaborations, international lectures, and publications to enhance credibility. Meanwhile, firms such as Morphogenesis and Studio Mumbai have effectively used digital platforms, research publications, and interviews to communicate their design philosophies. Award submissions by Sanjay Puri Architects and Morphogenesis have further strengthened their industry positioning through third-party validation. The research highlights the power of architectural brandscapes. The rise of social media engagement



has further transformed architectural marketing, with firms utilizing it to share insights, engage with industry professionals, and educate potential clients. Moreover, strong client relationships, built through transparent communication, immersive experiences, and personalized interactions, foster loyalty and brand advocacy. [5]

### **5.2. Broader Implications of the Findings**

The strategic public relations, marketing, and client relations are not only essential for individual architectural firms but also for the overall growth and global positioning of India's architectural industry. By embracing ethical and alternative promotional strategies, architects can enhance public awareness of sustainable and innovative design practices, influencing urban development and architectural discourse. The success of sustainability-driven branding, as seen in firms like Morphogenesis and Studio Mumbai, also reflects a shifting global demand for environmentally responsible architecture, positioning Indian firms as key contributors to green building innovations. Additionally, these findings demonstrate that client relationships and experiential engagement are as crucial as marketing, reinforcing the value of transparency, trust, and personalized architectural experiences in securing long-term business success. [6]

### **5.3. Recommendations Derived from the Research**

The Indian Architecture Regulatory Bodies have made such regulations that currently restrict advertising and solicitation, limiting architects' ability to market their work. To modernize the profession while maintaining ethical integrity, the following modifications are suggested. Suggested Modifications to the Indian Architecture Regulatory bodies on Public Relations (PR) and Marketing for Architects Clarify Social Media Guidelines: Regulatory Body should define clear rules on what architects can post. Allowing project showcases, conceptual designs, and industry discussions, while not allowing direct promotional messages like "Hire us for the best designs!". Adding Media & PR Engagement guidelines in professional conduct: Architects should be explicitly permitted to: Participate in interviews and industry discussions.

Write for news articles, magazines, and research journals. Redefine Ethical Promotion & Branding Architects should be allowed to: A. Have a professional tagline keeping in consideration that, that tagline does not harm or degrade others firm or individual. Restricts other non-Architectural persons to use the name Architect Currently, non-architects are also using the terms architects or giving architectural services that should be strictly prohibited.

### **6. Study Limitation and Consideration**

This study primarily relies on secondary data sources, including published articles, firm websites, media coverage, and regulatory documents. While these sources provide valuable insights into architectural branding and client engagement strategies, they lack first hand perspectives from architects themselves. The absence of direct interviews or surveys limits the ability to capture individual experiences, challenges, and emerging trends in PR, marketing, and client relations. Furthermore, the findings may not be fully generalizable across India's architectural landscape, as regional firms and niche practices face different market dynamics and constraints.

### **Conclusion**

Despite restrictions on direct advertisements, Architects can strategically enhance visibility through thought leadership, media collaborations, digital presence, and award recognition. Different Firms demonstrate that ethical PR and branding strategies can elevate an architect's market position without violating professional guidelines. However, several challenges persist. Limited accessibility to digital marketing tools, intense industry competition, and reliance on indirect promotional methods make it difficult for smaller firms to achieve the same level of recognition as well-established architects. Additionally, client trust and perception remain crucial, as excessive digital branding may create an impression of prioritizing visibility over design excellence. Economic shifts, evolving policies, and sustainability mandates further shape the way architects approach branding and client relations. Ultimately, the study concludes that Indian architects can build strong, ethical brands through research-driven marketing, knowledge-sharing, and strategic



partnerships.

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